

In the News

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Message from the Mayor

In the past several weeks, I conducted valuable discussions with District of Columbia residents on the subject of school reform issues in the District, and in particular the issue of governance. As we've been widely discussing the past year, the District is facing significant challenges in public education. Academic achievement continues to be among the lowest in the nation, and despite recent increased investments, progress continues to be slow.

We must build a city of learning in the District. We must work together to improve outcomes for all residents regardless of age, race, class or gender. In addition, our institutions of learning must be of high quality, whether they're public, private or nonprofit.

I think of education reform in terms of threes. First, our three age groups:

- We should place a major emphasis on improving educational outcomes in grades 1-12
- We should have expanded opportunities for continuing education
- And we should have increased access to high-quality early childhood education

Next, our three educational sectors:

- Traditional public schools (DCPS) serve and will always serve the vast majority of our students
- Charter schools provide alternative public education options. They can serve as models of innovation for traditional public schools
- And private schools provide additional options for quality education

As I said in my State of the District address, we can no longer accept the status quo. I have introduced a bill to the DC Council that I believe can help us reform our system. My school governance bill emphasizes the importance of a strong leader for our school system—a Chancellor who has the power and freedom to run the day-to-day operations of schools.

Moreover, my bill will create a Cabinet-level position for that Chancellor. There will be a direct line of accountability between that person and myself. The role of the Board of Education will change to an advisory capacity—the Board will still be an important avenue for citizen input.

Some people argue that governance does not matter. They point to studies that say several jurisdictions that made significant changes have seen little or no benefits to student achievement. First, this is not true. There have been significant improvements in Chicago and Boston, for example.

Furthermore, governance arrangements establish the rules of the game. They determine who is responsible and accountable for what happens within a system. In an education system, the real work of learning takes place in the classroom—in the interaction between teacher and student. However, decisions by school leaders, superintendents, and policymakers can either help or hinder quality education in the classroom. Without good governance, good schools are the exception, not the rule.



AGENCY WEBSITES

[Office of Tax and Revenue](#)

[Department of Parks and Recreation](#)

[Department of Employment Services](#)

[Metropolitan Police Department](#)

[Office of Boards and Commissions](#)

[Commission on the Arts and Humanities](#)

Lead in the Water Update

The District of Columbia is actively engaged in solving the recent problem of the presence of lead in our city's drinking water. In recent weeks, we've taken myriad steps to get to the bottom of the problem while at the same time providing water filters to some of our city's residents.

Recent tests by the District's Water and Sewer Authority (WASA) indicate that roughly two-thirds of the lead service line homes are showing elevated levels of lead. There are approximately 23,000 homes with lead service lines in the District.

We need to make sure we do all we can to protect the residents who live in these homes. Two weeks ago, I directed WASA to ship filter pitchers—or filters that attach to faucets—to all 23,000 homes with lead lines. Every one of the 23,000 homes will get a filter shipped to their door.

Since this is a developing story, I want to make sure our readers stay abreast of the situation and realize that we're doing everything we can to resolve it. But my job—**our** job—right now, is to get the federal government to fix the problem and make sure we help residents minimize or eliminate any possible risk to their health.

Important contact information:

- **DC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (for blood testing information)**
www.dchealth.dc.gov (202) 671-0733
- **DC WASA (lead hotline)**
www.dcwasa.com Email address for the lead hotline: WQP2003@dcwasa.com
(202) 787-2732
- **DC GOVERNMENT (general questions)**
www.dc.gov (202) 727-1000

Community Profile

Joy Jones

She is an author, poet, speaker, performer, volunteer, and Ward 5 community leader. Native Washingtonian Joy Jones has used creative expression as a healing method for forensic patients at St. Elizabeths Hospital for more than 15 years.

Joy says she has gained “a different perspective on [her] own blessings” through her time at St. Elizabeths, where she provides creative expression workshops to men and women found not guilty by reason of insanity for the commission of felony crimes. Participants in her poetry and photography workshops often have their work published in a newsletter or displayed at the hospital, giving them a sense of pride and hope.

“I want them to come out thinking of themselves as artists, not criminals,” she said. “This has been humbling...I've seen a lot of talent, and a lot of mental illness.”

In the first year of her poetry workshops, a man who never smiled and seldom spoke began to do both during her sessions. Many of her workshops are conducted in collaboration with The Spoken Word, a performance group directed by Joy whose mission is to preserve and promote traditional means of story-making including storytelling, drama, and books in print.

Turkey Thicket Recreation Center in Ward 5 has been part of Joy's life since she was young, and in 1995 she began teaching creative writing workshops for youth through DC WritersCorps. Along with youth from the recreation center, Joy recently compiled stories, poems, and photographs of the history of the center, called *The Turkey Thicket Griots Project*. Joy has also written three books, including a children's book entitled *Tambourine Moon*. To learn more about Joy, her books and recent projects, please visit www.joyjonesonline.com

Joy is the December 2003 adult winner of the Mayor's Community Service Award, sponsored by the DC Commission on National and Community Service. If you would like to nominate a youth or adult for the monthly award, visit www.cnscs.dc.gov for nomination information or call (202) 727-9461.



Joy Jones



LINK TO OTHER WEBSITES

[DC Agenda](#)

[Hands on DC](#)

[DC Convention and Tourism](#)

[DC Public Library](#)

School Choice Administrator Announced

The Secretary of the US Department of Education Rod Paige joined me and other city officials on March 24 to announce the administrator of the DC School Choice Incentive program.

Less than two months ago, the US Congress passed the 2004 budget. The bipartisan budget includes \$14 million for the "DC Choice Incentive Program." This is a five-year, federally funded program to provide approximately 2,000 low-income students in the District with grants of up to \$7,500 each. The students will attend the participating private school of their choice.

It was with great pleasure that I joined Secretary Paige to announce that we selected the Washington Scholarship Fund (WSF) as the administrator of the DC School Choice Incentive Program. There is ample work ahead of us in the upcoming months to ensure that our children are provided with expanded educational options. I am confident that the WSF is capable and ready for the task at hand.

WSF has a proven track record of providing scholarships to District students. Officials there are keenly aware of the needs of some of our lowest income families. They have assembled a quality team of partners and I expect they will continue their good work on behalf of our children.

It's been long road getting to this day. Secretary Paige's leadership on the issue of school choice has been invaluable. He's been extremely willing to work with District leadership to design a program unique to our city—one that reflects the needs and desires of our residents. And Congressman Tom Davis fought hard for us in the US House of Representative to get the initial legislation passed.

Senator Judd Gregg sponsored this legislation in the Senate and ensured funds were allocated to the initiative. Senator Diane Feinstein showed her willingness to take on this controversial issue. I am most grateful for her steadfast support of the District of Columbia, and her respect for local governance.

Finally, Councilmember Kevin Chavous (Ward 7) and School Board President Peggy Cooper Cafritz stood with me in this struggle and had the courage to act on what they believed was right and not what was politically safe.

Most of all, this success would not have been possible without the District parents. Their desire to have the best for their children has kept all of us focused on this goal. I thank them for their tenacity and patience. I look forward to the success of this bold experiment that we're taking on in our city.

Mount Vernon Triangle Action Agenda

On March 23, I was pleased to announce the release of the Mount Vernon Triangle Action Agenda. So much has happened downtown since I stood in the Martin Luther King Library more than three years ago to announce the *Downtown Action Agenda*—and the Mount Vernon Triangle is yet another piece of that Action Agenda that we're making a reality.

In the last few years, our downtown has become the home of hospitality and culture with a beautiful new convention center at Mount Vernon Square, and new museums such as our City Museum, the Spy Museum, and the upcoming Newseum.

Downtown has become the hub of our region's entertainment with the expansion of the Shakespeare Theater and the opening of 26 new restaurants in the last 10 months. Downtown is also the hub for retail with prominent establishments including the new flagship H&M clothing store and a new Joseph Banks store.

Downtown also hosts 1,500 residential units completed or under construction in the Triangle and the Massachusetts Avenue corridor. An additional 1,400 downtown units are in the planning stages.

The fruits of the Downtown Action Agenda have now traveled north to the Mount Vernon Square area and the Mount Vernon Triangle. This is the crucial piece in the area's completion. It will link the city's historic neighborhoods with new growth, activity and offerings downtown.



Spring Is Here, and It's Almost Summer

On March 19, I had the pleasure of playing table tennis with some of the best players in the world at the new Emery Recreation Center in Northwest—and that's only a little piece of what our Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is bringing us this spring.

USA Table Tennis conducted their Olympic Doubles Trials on March 19 and March 20 at Emery. The competition, sanctioned by the United States Olympic Committee and USA Table Tennis, selected the American Men's and Women's Doubles pairs that will represent the United States in the North American Trials this month in Atlanta.

The sport of table tennis exemplifies the purest form of athletics. To succeed in this fast-paced competition, participants must have exemplary hand-eye coordination. In doubles competition, teamwork is also important. Partners must communicate through verbal and non-verbal methods to win a match.



This spring, DPR is offering a host of other activities and programs, classes and leagues in athletics, personal and therapeutic enrichment, academic development, after-school care, environmental education, childhood and adolescent development and fine arts for every age group.

The department's list of opportunities would not be complete without its programs for senior citizens, who make up a vital part of the District's population. Seniors can keep physically fit through aerobic classes, acquire a new hobby in billiards, or learn new computer skills. In addition, many citywide recreation and housing complex sites offer a comprehensive range of programs and activities over the course of 14-week sessions for registered seniors.

The department's 2004 Spring/Summer Program Guide can be found at locations throughout the city, including DPR recreation and community centers, District government offices, DC Council satellite bureaus and Metro stations. For more information, please visit: www.dpr.dc.gov.

Millicent Allewelt Bill Signed into Law

On March 23, I joined Councilmember Kathy Patterson and other city officials, along with the family of Millicent Allewelt, for the signing of Bill 15-34, *The Millicent Allewelt Act of 2004*. This legislation requires law enforcement agencies in the District to retain evidence and case files in open homicide investigations for a long period of time.

Millicent Allewelt was sexually assaulted and slain in her apartment in Southwest on June 27, 1973. Recently, her family learned of the Metropolitan Police Department's efforts to re-investigate old murder cases to see if they could be solved through the analysis of DNA evidence, a technological process not available when Millicent Allewelt was killed. Unfortunately, because of the inconsistency in the storage of evidence, the evidence related to Allewelt's case could not be found.

At its heart, this legislation is a new crime fighting tool to help solve homicides in the District. The signing of this bill is the result of a collaborative effort that will help us improve criminal investigations and the homicide closure rate.

This important bill requires law enforcement agencies in the District to retain evidence and case files in open homicide investigations—as well as crimes of assault with intent to kill, aggravated assault, assault on a police officer and burglary—for 65 years from the date the crime was reported.

The Millicent Allewelt Act of 2004 will help create a more efficient and safer District of Columbia.



Mayor's Week in Review

Mayor Attends Youth Labor Fair

On **March 23**, I attended the fourth annual Labor 2 Youth Fair in Northwest. The Department of Employment Services joined the District's Community Services Agency and the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO to educate our youth about labor issues and opportunities.

Mayor Meets with Mayor of Brazzaville, Congo

On **March 25**, I met with Mayor Hugues Ngouelondele of Brazzaville, Congo and a six-person delegation that paid a courtesy visit to me at the John A. Wilson Building.

Mayor Delivers Remarks at Farewell for Verizon's Marie Johns

On **March 25**, I delivered remarks at a farewell party for Marie Johns, formerly head of Verizon Washington, DC.

Mayor Delivers Remarks at Housing Event

On **March 26**, I delivered remarks at a ribbon cutting ceremony for the first District resident to purchase a home with the aid of voucher funding.

Mayor Delivers Remarks at Hotel Grand Opening

On **March 27**, I delivered remarks at the grand opening of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Southwest—our city's newest luxury hotel.

Mayor Delivers Remarks at Cherry Blossom Festival

On **March 27**, I delivered remarks at the 2004 Cherry Blossom Festival opening ceremony.

District Activities



Naoyuki Agawa, Minister of Public Affairs at Japanese Embassy, joined Michon Peck of DCPS and Mayor Williams on March 25 for the Mayor's Cherry Blossom Poster Contest 2004 Awards Ceremony.

Joining Mayor Williams was one of the poster winners, Kiara Brooks, of Brookland Elementary School in Northeast.



On March 22, Mayor Williams delivered remarks and engaged in a dialogue with parents on his school governance reform proposal and other issues related to school improvement at Wilson Senior High School in Northwest.



Preeminent social and civil rights activist Dr. Dorothy Height, 90, received the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor March 18 from President Bush and congressional leaders including Sen. Hilary Clinton, former labor secretary Alexis Herman, Sen. Carl Levin and Rep. Diane Watson.



On March 28, Mayor Williams delivered remarks during the Cherry Blossom Japanese Stone Lantern Lighting Ceremony and Concert.



Community News

- [Mayor Signs Bill to Require DC Law Enforcement Agencies to Retain Evidence for 65 Years](#)
- [Administrator for DC School Choice Incentive Program Selected](#)
- [Mayor Williams Introduces FY 2005 Budget and Financial Plan](#)

[View all News Releases](#)

Upcoming Events

4/03 National Cherry Blossom Festival Parade

10 am

Beginning at Constitution Avenue and 7th Street NW

For more information, visit www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org

4/03 Taking Poetry to the Streets

11 am - 4 pm

G Street between 9th and 10th Streets, NW

For more information call the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library at (202) 727-1101

4/16 DC Emancipation Day Parade and Celebration

10 am - 9:30 pm

Parade begins at Constitution Avenue and 7th Street, NW

For more information, call (202) 727-6306

